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ABSTRACT

The articles in this focused journal issue discuss women authors and examine female images in English and American literature. The titles of the articles and their authors are as follows: (1) "Margaret Fuller and Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Rhetoric and the Shape of Learning" (Susan Lundvall Brodie); (2) "Feminist Psychology through Feminist Literature" (Richard Morehouse); (3) "John Donne and the Countess of Huntingdon: The Transformation of Renaissance Woman" (George Klawitter); (4) "Women Working: Images in American Literature" (Julia Hornbastel); (5) "Teaching 'Women's Literature'" (Diane Long Hoeveler); (6) "Male-Female Relationships in Literature" (Kathy White); and (7) "Selected Bibliography: Guidelines for Nonsexist Language" (Laura Gintz Jasper); and (8) "Book Reviews" by Laura Quinn and Nicholas J. Karolides). (References are listed for most articles.) (NKA)

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WOMEN'S LITERATURE

For English Teachers At All Levels
April, 1986 Volume 28, No. 3

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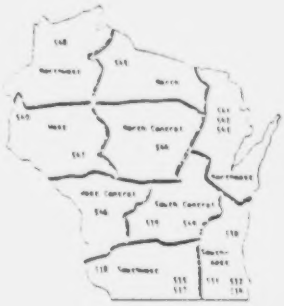

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MARGARET FULLER AND CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN: RHETORIC AND THE SHAPE OF LEARNING

SUSAN LUNDVALL BRODIE
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Margaret Fuller and Charlotte Perkins Gilman were among the most influential voices in the history of the women's movement. Both were impressive intellectuals, radical thinkers whose arguments are still read as key documents in the struggle for women's rights. Rather than focus on their social or philosophical contributions, however, I would like to examine how these two women, by adopting different rhetorical modes, were able to explore different planes of experience, and thus promote different kinds of understanding of issues central to woman's situation. If we read Fuller's inspiring argument, "The Great Lawsuit" (1843), side by side with Gilman's familiar story, "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892), we can come to new insights and a fuller understanding of women's position than either alone can give. The key, I believe, lies in the choice of rhetoric--in the power of rhetoric to shape experience, frame truth, and affect our learning. I propose to examine Fuller's essay and Gilman's story, then, with an eye towards discovering how the language of argument and the language of fiction each promotes a particular way of knowing the issues: one rational, the other emotional; one social and philosophical, the other personal and psychological.

To begin, while both pieces address parallel issues, they do so from different contexts and with fundamentally different intents. Both may be seen to move beyond the subject of woman's position *per se*, to suggest universal problems of the individual whose right to self-development is denied by irrational, restrictive attitudes.[1] Fuller's primary concern, however, is with the social, the global import of the issue. As a philosopher, she spent most of her life exposing the roots of social injustices. The intent of "Lawsuit" (as of most of her work) is to instruct, to exhort and inspire changes in attitude befitting her own lofty transcendental conceptions of human perfectability and universal harmony. Gilman's aim is of another sort. While she, too, wishes to promote changes in attitudes,[2] she is primarily concerned with the private reality--with constructing meaning from her personal experience of the issues. She finds the shape of meaning not in reasons or arguments, but in metaphors that help confront and explore painful, psychic truths. Where Fuller's essay aims at dispelling the myth of male supremacy, Gilman's story shows that myth in operation, in action. We come to know it intimately, as she does, rather than to see it in broad, public context, as Fuller does. Finally, Fuller urges women to rise above the constrictive thinking of the myth; Gilman points us in the other direction, plumbing our depths in a journey of self-encounter. The two pieces, then, show the writers' different aims, and show how those aims are revealed in rhetorical choices.

This difference in purpose is most immediately reflected, I think, in each writer's choice of voice and tone. In "Lawsuit," we hear the voice of the leader, the intellectual who seeks to inspire and instruct. It is the public voice of the social reformer addressing global issues--formal in diction, hortatory in tone: "as the principle of liberty is better understood and more nobly interpreted, a broader protest is made in behalf of woman" (Fuller 159); and again, "We would have every

arbitrary barrier thrown down. We would have every path laid open to woman as freely as to man" (164). Fuller's choice of pronoun alone signals an authoritative stance. Even when she uses the first person, we hear the lofty, distant "I" that addresses the individual not personally, but in a broad social context. Gilman, by contrast, portrays a woman writing her own story, talking to herself by writing in her diary. This technique alone symbolizes intimate writer-reader dialog. Gilman's "I" is the intimate "I" of self-communion, self-disclosure. Thus, instead of Fuller's confidence, we hear a puzzling, probing tone, sometimes rebellious, sometimes wildly triumphant.

Similarly, the choice of detail shows the different aim and perspective of each writer. Fuller appeals to reason and challenges us with her incredible scope and deft intellectual maneuvers. Her argument is sweeping but prolix, and draws on a density of references, analyses, and exemplars to give concrete shape and convincing form to the ideal of reform she proposes. Because her sights are clearly on the universal and the abstract, the very nature and density of her references tend to create some distance. They point us outward, where the ideal finds expression in historical, biblical, and literary figures. Even the diction is abstract, formal, religious in tone. Gilman, on the other hand, grounds her work not in objective knowledge, but in private, psychic experience. Thus, she uses charged emotive language, probing metaphors, and grotesque, disturbing images to capture the growing split between interior and exterior reality that she wishes to explore. In her story, argument and explanation take the form of symbolic action and metaphors that probe and tamper.

Let us turn, now, to some of the writers' key points and examine more closely how the language of argument and the language of fiction give rise to different ways of knowing and responding to experience.

Fuller moves her readers into her argument by an impassioned discussion of our national ideas, then gains immediate emphasis and sympathy for the injustices of woman's position by using the traditional charged similes: women are treated like slaves, like children, like sheep penned in. "The numerous party," she argues, "strive . . . by writing or lending little treatises, to mark out with due precision the limits of woman's sphere, and woman's mission, and to prevent other than the rightful shepherd from climbing the wall, or the flock from using any chance gap to run astray" (161). The image is powerful, the tone cutting, but the effect, I think, is not nearly so immediate as Gilman achieves through dramatization of action and response: John laughs at his wife's desire for creative expression; he calls her "blessed little goose" and "little girl." He lovingly dictates her every move, oversees her every mouthful, and carries her off to bed, literally making her a child who must be read to sleep. The narrator's reaction to this treatment resonates in us more disturbingly, I think, than Fuller's analogy, for it forces us to look inward rather than out: reduced to uncontrollable fits of crying, the narrator tears and gnaws in frustration at her force-fed, nailed-down world. Where Fuller uses analogy, Gilman "puts us there," in the upper story nursery with its barred windows that so powerfully symbolize woman's social/intellectual incarceration.

Fiction, then, "gives us the wound"; argument works another way. Fuller looks beyond the here and now, beyond the pain. She routes out the causes of injustice and spurs her readers to action through eloquent warnings: "Human beings are not so constituted that they can live without expansion; and if they do not get it one way, must another, or

perish" (163). But where Fuller tells us, Gilman shows: cut off from all meaningful activity and social intercourse, the narrator creeps in secret quest of self-knowledge and self-expression. She tears at the wall-paper, desperately searching for freedom and a sense of identity through a mad effort to liberate the woman she sees trapped behind the "suicidal" pattern. That woman, of course, is her hidden self, and she knows that she must help her break through the pattern or see her become another strangled head, another victim trapped by the myth.

For Fuller, the way out of the trap is through transcending restrictive attitudes, through developing (by strength of will and nobility of purpose) the "dignified sense of self-dependence" exemplified by her awesome catalog of ideal women (from Sappho and Elizabeth I through Wollstonecraft and Angelina Grimke). Gilman finds no such inspiration. Instead, she dramatizes how nearly impossible dignity and fulfillment are when one is caught in the strangle-hold of the myth. Fuller aims for the ideal. She speaks from a sense of love, not torment, framing in religious terminology a new vision of woman "singing . . . from the lyrical overflow of a divine rapture" (182). Gilman looks reality in the face. What she discovers is the distorted image women have been forced to adopt: "bloated curves and flourishes,""debased Romanesque'" patterns that go "waddling up and down in isolated columns of fatuity" (144). Fuller's ideal image seems rarefied, indeed, next to Gilman's unnerving and grotesquely powerful metaphor that captures the cost of liberation: the woman creeping along the floor, tied with rope so she won't lose her way, while the patterns she has torn down hangs in shreds, the "strangled heads and bulbous eyes and waddling fungus growths just shriek[ing] with derision" (151).

For, in Fuller's rhetoric, self-control means self-dependence. It is the way to develop and liberate the self (an act of volition denied by the restrictive attitude of male supremacy). Control, indeed, is the key concept of the myth. But Gilman knows another meaning for the word. She shows us how the rigid, artificial self-control required of women acts to strangle the true self. The real self, when it has been recognized to exist at all, must go underground (creeping only at night) or be lost forever (commit suicide in the bizarre contradictions of the pattern). Living within the pattern is self-destructive, suicidal, but liberation--rejection of the expected role--may cost an equally high price.

Finally, it is through the telling of a story that Gilman helps us to feel the urgency from which both of these writers speak out. Through story, through metaphor and symbolic action, we, too, experience the exigency--we, too, feel the wound. Fuller's urgency, like her passion, is of another sort. It comes from the idealistic convicitons that inspire, but give little suggestion of the darkness within--the ugly psychic wound inflicted by the myth in action. Indeed, Fuller as philosopher seeks to exorcize the myth by use of reason, to reason it away, as it were. Gilman knows differently; she must get down on her hands and knees and do battle with it.

In the end, reason, argument, facts can all act powerfully to persuade and enlighten; they can indeed be a motivating force in social change. But they do not address the darkness and turmoil within us, the forces that we must struggle to understand before social change is likely to become a personal reality. For, I believe that we must know the personal exigency, we must feel the private, psychic reality resonate within us before the public or universal ideal can have meaning for us. While

Continued on page 21

FEMINIST PSYCHOLOGY THROUGH FEMINIST LITERATURE

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> How can reading be wrong if it is simply a retranscription . . . It can and it is: anyone who has not misread a text has not read it either. . . . Anyone who has not entered into a dialogue with a text, who has not questioned and listened to its answers, not selected some parts for special emphasis while omitting consideration of others, anyone who has not done this, has not read the text. The training may come from literary criticism or philosophy, but no one instinctively knows how to read a text and no one learns how to do it by studying natural science.
>
> (Schneiderman, 1983, pp 33-34)

I start with this quote to set forth the task; to read and misread a text without training in literary criticism or philosophy. The text to be explored is Simone de Beauvoir's *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*.

Basic premise

Literature, especially autobiography informs psychology which in turn informs autobiography. Therefore, to gain a better perspective on feminist psychology we must look at feminist literature and vise versa. Carol Gilligan's work, especially *In A Different Voice*, draws on autobiography and literature to enhance and more fully explain her theory of women's moral and social-personal development in much the same manner as Erik Erikson did in explaining the social-personal development of males in *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. In fact, psychoanalysis grew out of and to a large degree is only explainable in terms of literature and philosophy. Freud, Jung, Erikson and most recently Lacan, are all to some degree literary people. It is significant to note that Freud never received a prize in science, but did receive the Goethe Prize in 1930, and that Erik Erikson won both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award.

What is autobiography? Autobiography is an attempt by the writer to bring meaning to a lived experience. If it is true as Michael Polanyi states in *Meaning* that "(o)ur lives are formless, shaped by a hundred cross-currents. The arts are imaginative representations, hewn into patterns these patterns when jointly integrated with important content, produce a meaning of distinct quality." (Polanyi and Prosch, 1985, p 34), then autobiography can be seen as an attempt to bring meaning not only to the reader but also to the writer. Simone de Beauvoir gives this meaning to her writing and perhaps to her autobiography as well. In discussing her dream of being a writer some day, de Beauvoir says, "By writing a work based on my own experience, I would recreate and justify my existence. At the same time be serving humanity; what more beautiful gift could I make than the book I would write? I was interested at the same time in myself and others; I accepted my incarnation but I did not want to renounce my universal prerogative, my plan as a writer reconciled everything; it gratified all the asperations which had been unfolding in me during the past fifteen years." (p 142).

Autobiography, therefore, is an appropriate vehicle to explore certain developmental differences in men and women, and perhaps to some degree historical changes in the way society sees this development. Of interest to us here is the difference between the relationship between

identity and intimacy. These differences are of importance because of the role they play in the life plans, specifically careers and marriage. To better understand the importance of the developmental stages of identity and intimacy, some definitions are in order. Erik Erikson developed a theory of personality development which centers around eight developmental stages - 1. Trust vs. Mistrust; 2. Autonomy vs. Shame, Doubt; 3. Initiative vs. Guilt; 4. Industry vs. Inferiority; 5. Identity vs. Identity Confusion; 6. Intimacy vs. Isolation; 7. Generativity vs. Stagnation; 8. Integrity vs. Despair. Each stage builds on the other and evolve around a crisis. This crisis is seen in terms of the Chinese symbol for crisis which combines the two characters of danger and opportunity. The two significant crises of adolescent and early adulthood are identity and intimacy. "Identity," Erikson says, "is the accrued confidence that the inner sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others, as evidenced in the tangible promise of one's career" (Erikson, 1950-1963 p). This stage is counterposed to intimacy which emerges from the search for and the insistence on identity. Once identity is reached, a person is then ready and eager to fuse his identity with that of others. "He is ready for intimacy, that is, the capacity to commit himself to concrete affiliations and commitments, even though they may call for significant compromises (Erikson, 1959-1963 p 63).

Erikson is very clear about the order in which these and all the stages which he outlines appear. There is an order and one stage must follow the other. He is especially clear about identity and intimacy. "It is only when identity formation is well on its way that intimacy, which in reality is a counterpoint as well as a fusing of identities, is really possible . . . The youth who is not clear of his identity shies away from interpersonal intimacy or throws himself into acts of intimacy which are 'promiscuous' without true fusion or real abandon." (Erikson, 1968, pp 135-6).

Erikson may provide a clear and even helpful picture of the development of many, perhaps most, males. I think he does. But does this picture hold for females? Carol Gilligan in her *In A Different Voice* makes a clear case that this is not generally true for women. She in fact states that often the reverse order of development occurs with intimacy coming before or identity growing out of intimacy. Gilligan makes this point by exploring the lives of several hundred men and women, as well as by looking at literature, biography, and autobiography. With Gilligan's work as the theoretical background, we will explore Simone de Beauvoir's *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter* to see if this perspective holds and more important to gain a deeper understanding of the theory "in the flesh" and also its relationship to lived experience.

Analysis

To undertake this exploration, we will begin by presenting a short overview of the autobiography with some editorial comments. This will be followed with an examination of three significant relationships in the life of Simone de Beauvoir, namely Zaza Mabille, Jacques Laiguillon and Herbaund (who doesn't seem to have a first name). The exploration of these relationships will show how, as de Beauvoir's relationship with signiciant other grows, she develops a better sense of herself as a person and as a person who will make a contribution through her chosen career, that is, writing. The paper will end with a backward glance at Ericson's model to show the difference between male and female development as Erikson draws from some autobiographical sketches of George B. Shaw.

Simone de Beauvoir (born 1906) grew up in a middle class Catholic home in Paris at the turn of the century. She is the first born child, and has a sister two and a half years younger. Until she is ten years old, her family and her sister are the most important people in her life. At ten, Simone meets Zaza. ". . .we would talk. This was a novel pleasure for me. My parents used to talk to me, and I used to talk to them, but we never talked together; there was not sufficient distance between my sister and myself to encourage discussion. But with Zaza, I had real conversations, like the ones Papa had in the evening with Mama." (p 93) Zaza and Simone grew close to each other and spent much time together from age ten to age twenty. They were competitors and close friends though rather formal with each other until their college years, calling each other by the formal *vous* rather than *tu*.

Simone is a good student and a pious and somewhat mystical Catholic. She spends her school year in Paris and her summers on a country estate of her grandfather. Simone passes her school leaving examinations with honors. She is rather plain and because of the war and the depression, she is without a dowry. She, therefore, begins college. This is not completely satisfying, nor completely distasteful to her family, but becoming an intellectual is not what proper middle class families would prefer for their children, especially for their daughters.

Simone takes to college. She has an extended, somewhat platonic, somewhat romantic, but never sexual, relationship with Jacques Laigiullon. Simone does very well in college and does a doctorate in philosophy. At this stage, she meets Herbaud, a member of the Sartre group. Though this may not appear to be much of a story, and as you might guess, all the action is in the relationship with people and in inner dialogue Simone has with herself, it is important to have some idea as to what the "story line" is.

Zaza was the first significant person for Simone outside of her family. Simone learned who she was by comparing herself to Zaza. "I compare this (Zaza's solid as a block of marble') with my own internal void and despised myself. Zaza forces me to make this comparison because she often drew a parallel between her nonchalance and my earnestness, her defects and my perfections which she liked to poke fun at. I was not spared her sarcasm (p 122). A little later, Simone de Beauvoir states, "I've no personality, I would say sadly to myself. The paradox was that I became aware of this deficiency at the very moment when I discovered my individuality; my universal aspiration had seemed to me until then to exist in its own right, but now it had become a character trait. "Simone" she writes in her journal, "is interested in everything."

This interest in everything is an important aspect of deBeauvoir's development. It is the cause of her joy and sadness, the reason for the loss of her faith and the finding of philosophy, it is at the root of her problems with family and friends and the source of her difficulty as well as her interest and need to write. Her relationships with the significant people already mentioned grows and affects the way she sees her interest in everything grow and change. She writes of her relationship with Jacques: "As soon as I felt I was useful and loved, horizons brightened and again I would make fresh resolutions; be loved, be admired, be necessary, be someone. I was more and more certain that I would have masses of things to say: and I would say them." (p 231) She explores her interest in all things in an internal dialogue which is an extention of a discussion and an ongoing source of difficulty with Jacques - what should one's attitude toward life be? She states: "on the day of my

nineteenth birthday, I wrote in the library at the Sorbonne a long dialogue between two voices, both my own; one spoke of the vanity of all things, of disgust and weariness; the other affirmed that life even a sterile existence, was beautiful." (p 231)

With Herbaund she is still interested in everything but he is more of a peer and can be critical, expects things from her but most of all, accepts her for what she is. This acceptance helps Simone gain confidence in herself and begin to understand and even appreciate herself as a person. "I like him more and more, and the pleasant thing about it all was that he made me like myself more; others had taken me serious, he found me amusing. . . . I discovered that I had a way of walking and that I had a voice, it was something new." (p 323)

This brief encounter with three of Simone's friends tells us something about how these people affect Simone's sense of herself as a person trying to understand herself and the world. With Simone these two understandings seems always to go together. Zaza is the first person to assist Simone in understanding herself. She is in some ways a mirror for her, but a negative mirror: she finds out who she is by how she is different from Zaza. On the first day of their meeting, Simone finds that Zaza was in a bad accident and was badly burned. Simone says, "Nothing that important had ever happened to me." As Simone grows older and more knowledgeable she looks for different kinds of understanding. Jacques provides Simone with a new look at the world through his slightly irreverant eyes and through his caring, and for the opportunity he gave Simone for caring. "How grateful I was to Jacques for his lack of set ideas! I wanted to help him as he had helped me, even more than by our childhood's past I felt bound to him by a sort of pact which made his 'salvation' even more important than my own."

As we saw earlier, Herbaund is both critical and supportive. He more than anyone else meets Simone's criterion of "accepting me as I am." Before she met him she would say, "I no longer even hoped to have a true understanding with another human being. Not one of my friends would take me as I was, Zaza prayed for me, Jacques thought I was too abstract, Pradelle deplored my rank obstinacy and the way I kept working myself up. . . . Cut off from everyone," she continues, "I no longer had any link with the world. It was becoming a spectical that did not concern me personally." (p 260)

To gain a better perspective on the role of intimacy and identity let us explore the two significant "counterpoints," that is career and marriage. Simone knows all along what kind of husband she would like and also from a quite early age, knows that she wants to be a writer. These two goals, however, are often a source of conflict. Her commitment to writing and with it her commitment to education, varies as she feels a part of or distant from people who understand her and whom she can consider equals. "I wanted husband and wife to have everything in common, each was to fulfill for the other the role of exact observer which I had formerly attributed to God. That ruled out the possibility of anyone *different*. I should not marry unless I met someone more accomplished than myself, yet my equal, my double." (p 145) This search for the perfect mate also affected her career goals as she understood the world primarily in terms of her relationship with people. "Once more the future was not and all promise should have been carried out already, without any need to wait. I had to be of service; to what? To whom: I had read, thought, and learned much; I told myself that I was ready, I was rich; but nobody wanted anything from me." (p 227) As Simone begins to be more

secure in her relationships (This one with Herbaund and he is the person that brings her into the Sartre group which eventually led to her life-long relationship with Sartre) she talks once more about her career, her goal. "I remembered other dusks and suddenly I felt stunned by that necessity which had been calling out for so desperately all this time: was to write my book. This was no new project. Yet because I wanted things to happen to me and they never did, I turned emotions into an event. Once again, I uttered vows to heaven and earth. Nothing was ever, under any circumstances to stand in my way of writing a book. The fact is that I was no longer calling my decision into question. I also promised that I would wish for happiness and find it." (pp 265-6)

These conflicts are in part a reflection of the personal life of Simone de Beauvoir, but they are also the more generally, a reflection of the times in which she lived and her role as a gifted woman. It is worth noting that George Bernard Shaw, also a gifted writer, and about 35 years Simone de Beauvoir's senior, is the, or at least a, model for Erikson's identity and intimacy orientation. Shaw writes very differently about his career. "The truth is that all men are in a false position in society until they have realized their possibilities and imposed them on their neighbors. They are tormented by a continual shortcoming in themselves; yet they irritate others by a continual overweening. This discord can be resolved by success or failure only, everyone is ill at ease until he has found his natural place, whether it is above or below his birthplace." (Erikson, 1968, p 143) Except for the use of the male pronoun, we may not disagree with this point. It appears that Simone de Beauvoir was struggling to impose herself on the world, that is, to write her book. The question, however, remains, does one first have a career, or does a career determine who I am or does my relationship with others, especially significant others, determine who I am. Erikson seems to say that I am my career first and only later can I become a person defined by relationships, while Gilligan says that I first define myself in terms of relationships and then in terms of what I do.

What difference does it make? We see ourselves in the lives of other people. If we have a better understanding of how persons develop, we will be better able to understand our personal experiences and the relationships which we have with others.

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JOHN DONNE AND THE COUNTESS OF HUNTINGDON: THE TRANSFORMATION OF RENAISSANCE WOMAN

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It is no secret that medieval theologians had a jaundiced view of woman: she is an imperfect male, a weak subordinate, even a monster. But hundreds of years later, Renaissance churchmen did little to improve her status. Ian Maclean in *The Renaissance Notion of Woman* comments, "The issue was of no great interest to the majority of Renaissance theologians,"[2] some echoing their medieval forebears, the others omitting discussion of the matter or amending it so slightly as to be of little consequence for the evolution of woman's equality. As we might expect, the poets of both eras reflect the contemporary theological thinking on the matter of woman because writers of verse were often well read in theology and naturally used current philosophies as the basis for their art.

Throughout the medieval period, poets had two distinct models for their delineations of woman: Eve and Mary, one the archetypal sinner, the other the greatest of saints. In a fourteenth century poem "Meditations on the Life and Passion of Christ," Mary is hailed as a heroic woman:

> We blesse the tyme thou were born,
> ffor thou hast cauth the Unicorn,
> That was so fers in the olde lawe;
> Thorw love he is fro heven drawe.
> Thou hast set him up-on thy barm
> And homly halsed hym in thin arm.[3]

Quintessential mother, she has tamed God Himself by luring Christ to earth: the medieval myth of the unicorn required that a virgin be used as bait to trap the one-horned beast which would lay his head in her lap (the male symbol is obvious) and thus be domesticated. This was a task for no ordinary woman as the recorded incidence of actual unicorn entrapments prove zero, but Mary was no ordinary woman. She was, in effect, a superwoman yet capable of both heroics and weaknesses as the same poem later witnesses:

> Whan sho sy that child y-strept
> That sho hadde so long y-kept,
> ffor reuthe and wo sho ful a-down
> And lay stille as deth in swoun. (ll. 1463-1466)

The fainting swound is evidence that the lady is not beyond the stereotypically female reaction to danger, and this from the same woman who faced off a beastly unicorn.

If the medieval poets were by and large incapable of both understanding the psychology of woman and portraying her realistically in verse, the poets who were to write two hundred years later were not much better. John Skelton has no via media for women: they are either angelic or devilish. "Agaynste A Comely Coystrowne" portrays a female named Anne who has a tongue like "an adders tayle, / Full lyke a scorpyon styngyng." Not only is she a shrew, but she is also promiscuous, as the poet jibes in a line that her "key is mete for every lok."[4] For the ladies he knew

at court, however, his poetry jumps to the opposite end of the art; there is nothing but praise for them so that they are deified beyond recognition as ordinary women. Jane Scrope in "Philip Sparowe" is:

> The lode stare of delyght,
> Dame Venus of all pleasure,
> The well of worldly treasure;
> She doth excede and pas
> In prudence dame Pallas. (ll. 1226-1230)

Jane is not only the equal of the love goddess, she excels the goddess of chastity. She is, in a phrase, too good to be true. Whether medieval and Renaissance noblewomen expected this kind of poetic treatment or not, it was the only fare they received from writers who often depended on the good wills of the ladies' husbands for their livelihood. Anyone who reads in the poetry of these two eras cannot help but be struck time and again by the fate of women: they were either praised beyond belief or ridiculed in crude stereotypes. Both types of portrayal did injustice to their actuality as human beings.

Into this tradition stepped John Donne, a poet with a reputation then and now for being a great womanizer, one perfectly male chauvinist. After all, he had written "Nc where / Lives a woman true, and faire," sentiments reechoed in a score of love poems. But I think we have accepted for too long a tradition of Donne based upon the best known of his lyrics, *The Songs and Sonets,* when he had written simultaneously a handful of private verses to individual ladies, verses which were never meant to be publicized and which indicate, I believe, more validly the actuality of his appreciation of woman. I am referring to the verse letters which he wrote over a period of twenty years. In these lyrics we see a poet breaking with the tradition of woman-as-slut and woman-as-angel because Donne addresses his audiences of one as equals.

In a verse letter to the Countess of Huntingdon, for example, Donne treads a fine line between insult and flattery. He begins by phrasing a theological dogma, that woman was made in man's image, not God's, and she therefore did not have a soul breathed into her. Moreover, it is a miracle to find innocence in woman because "Art and Nature this in them withstood." He strikes two blows at womankind within the first three stanzas of the poem, yet his nastiest is still to come:

> As such a starre, the Magi led to view
> The manger-cradled infant, God below.
> By vertues beames by fame deriv'd from you,
> May apt soules, and the worst may, vertue know.
>
> If the worlds age, and death be argu'd well
> By the Sunnes fall, which now towards earth doth bend,
> Then we might feare that vertue, since she fell
> So low as woman, should be neare her end.[5]

After telling the lady she is a paragon of virtue (a miracle in itself, he insists), he says that virtue must be on the brink of extinction because it has stooped so low as to enter a woman, a creature not even made in God's image. Donne, however, deftly turns the argument on its head when he hastens to point out that since virtue is nowadays so scarce, it is appreciated so much the more when it is found concentrated in a few individuals, even if one of them is a woman. Such, however, is all to her greatness because Donne adds, "She guilded us: But you are gold, and Shee; / Us she inform'd, but transubstantiates you." In other

words, it is no great honor for men to be virtuous because they are created directly by God in His likeness, but for a woman to be virtuous requires total transformation. To express the idea, Donne chooses the theological term "transubstantiates," used by Aquinas to explain (by way of Aristotle) how the accidents of bread and wine can remain while their substance can be changed into Christ's body and blood. It is quite a compliment, but Donne takes pains (lines 49-60) to explain why his flattery is not to be taken as conventional flattery. In fact, he says the countess's virtue has outgrown her beauty and her birth (l. 60), a sentiment few women, I should think, would like to hear. Donne ends by claiming, however, that he is a prophet, has a divine commission, as it were, to say things as he must:

> So I, but your Recorder am in this,
> Or mouth, or Speaker of the universe,
> A ministeriall notary, for 'tis
> Not I, but you and fame, that make this verse.

He gets himself off the hook by saying that he is merely interpreting what is a fact, his object being not the countess but "God in you to praise." The countess must have been humbled to receive a poem that spoke so aggressively of both her virtue and its proper instrumentality which was not her at all, but the Divine working in her. Any modern reader who compares this poem to the usual blather of the seventeenth century, Jonson's "The morning, timely rapt with holy fire" to the Countess of Bedford, for example, can better understand what innovative honesty Donne brought to poetry via the verse letter, a genre neglected since classic days.

Finally, what earmarks Donne's appreciation of woman's equality to men more than anything else in his verse is something we have overlooked for quite some time: he actually expected women to understand his complicated lyrics. That in itself was the height of compliment. Had he distrusted their darkened intellects as most poet-theologians did, he would have written them sugary rhymes easy to read, but he chose rather to challenge their brains, and for this he was condemned by Dryden for failing to amuse the ladies. When the records are finally cleared for John Donne, he will be noted not as a great insulter of women, but rather as one who respected them enough to write privately to them as beings as capable of understanding metaphysical speculations as he was of spinning them.

Notes

[1] Thomas Aquinas lists her with "other monsters of Nature" in *De veritate*, 5, 9 d.9.

[2] Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 10.

[3] "Meditations on the Life and Passion of Christ," ed. Charlotte D'Evelyn (London: Oxford University Press, 1921), ll. 25-30.

[4] John Skelton, *The Complete English Poems*, ed. John Scattergood (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 41.

[5] John Donne, *The Complete Poetry*, ed. John T. Shawcross (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1967), p. 235.

WOMEN WORKING: IMAGES IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

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Over the past few years, I have been interested in developing a course on women and literature and have sought a way to focus such a course. What I've devised may be an interesting approach for other instructors as it is an orientation that reveals the ingenuity and strength of women over the years as well as the hardships and injustices they've experienced. This approach also helps to develop an understanding of the work women have done, thus paralleling much of the non-fiction recently published on women and work.

I decided to approach the topic of women and literature via the theme "Women Working: Images in American Literature." I was interested to see, by way of my initial research, whether the historically recorded real working roles of women were reflected in fiction. We know that many women have been farmers, teachers, nurses, doctors, secretaries, clerks, domestics, factory workers, social workers, artists, etc. That is documented. But, does American literature reflect this reality? Are the images in fiction fairly accurate according to what the historical and sociological studies about women and work tell us? Are fictional portrayals accurate in reflecting what we know via reflections in diaries and letters written by women? Have there been novels with working women as protagonists? (And, if so, why hadn't I read many?) These were questions I considered as I read, gathering material for the course. Perhaps, I thought, this emphasis might help students better understand the myths and realities of women as well as our changing attitudes toward women.

What did I find after reading many American novels by and about women and studying the work female protagonists do? A number of observations and conclusions follow. The major roles women have performed in fiction are 1) farm work (overwhelmingly that), 2) jobs that are extensions of their nurturing roles, 3) factory work--especially in the early textile and clothing mills, and 4) housework (though the women are rarely protagonists if "only homemakers"). Let us look at some of the literary examples of these roles.

In fiction, women farm with husbands (for example in Cather's *My Antonia*, Kelley's *Weeds*, Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, and Walker's *Jubilee*), but also alone (in Cather's *O Pioneers!* and Glasgow's *Barren Ground*) and usually *successfully* when alone. There's a strong sense of the "earth mother" about the woman farmer, especially the single woman farmer. She's enriched by her relationship with the land and enriches it in return. She often has vision, imagination, and the daring to try new techniques (silos, for example) which others around her first ridicule, then later admire. But in novels involving farm couples, no matter how hard they work, they do often fail, the women worn out--as is the soil. They are ground down by poverty, erratic/undependable weather, market prices, and pregnancy. Edith Kelley's *Weeds* is an excellent example of this. Kelley, a friend of both Sinclair Lewis and Upton Sinclair, was a naturalistic writer, who in this novel gives us great detail of the hard life of a young Kentucky farm girl, Judy Blackford. Judy's a

vivacious healthy young girl at the beginning, but she marries a young neighbor, and soon grows worn as all the other women are with hard work, poor food, constant pregnancies, and a growing sense of futility over their increasing and hopeless poverty. Only rarely is her sense of beauty and joy renewed--by scenes in the natural world: spring flowers, a lovely vista in the Kentucky hills, young animals, etc. Her life is as limited as it has been for generations of hill tenant farmers. When rarely she can escape the ramshackle house, dirty clothes and dishes, and sickly babies, she finds relief outdoors. There is a deep bond between these farm women and the land. Even though it may not reward them, they work, nurse, and trust it. It's a major, basic factor of their lives.

It is not difficult to find examples of women working on the land for women have always, it seems, been considered natural nurturers. That has also been the basic function of women in so many paid work roles which are actually just extensions of their domestic nurturing roles. American fiction accurately portrays the reality here--the most common work-place jobs women entered were teaching, working in boarding houses, and other domestic jobs such as cooking, being maids, companions, or seamstresses.

By the 1820's and 1830's, women were very active as teachers for a number of interesting reasons: required public education necessitated many more teachers, women were less expensive to hire, and constituted a large pool of appropriate workers ("naturals for this noble work"). But there seem to be very few novels that describe this experience. To be sure, many women taught for only a few years before marriage (as in the *Little House* series)--and the sterotype has been that if they stayed on, they were maladjusted and frustrated as Kate Swift is in Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919). Others like Sara Smolinsky in Yezierska's *Bread Givers* (1925), struggle against poverty, prejudice (she's daughter of an immigrant Jewish rabbi), and family opposition to get a higher education and become professional teachers. That book and May Sarton's *The Small Room* (1961) are the strongest pictures of teachers I found. Louisa May Alcott also describes teaching in *Work* (1873), but her heroine Christy is not well educated, so works as a governess, which is being more a poor-relation-domestic servant-babysitter than a teacher. (She also has to fend off the attentions of males in the house). Christy goes on to try nearly all the genteel female employment available in her time (Civil War): seamstress, domestic, piece worker, nurse, reformer. Thus Alcott shows how the mid-nineteenth century woman was limited to the domestic sphere and/or menial, underpaid jobs.

Social reform became very popular volunteer and professional work for women when Jane Addams became famous for her settlement house and social work in Chicago's immigrant districts. There are a number of heroines in American fiction modeled on her--many of them, too, working in Chicago. *The Precipice* by Elia Peattie (1914) and "*Just Folks*" by Clara Laughlin (1910) are about young, educated women who work with serious commitment as professional social workers.

Nursing, another nurturing role, certainly has involved many women at home and then professionally, especially after the Civil War when training schools were established. But very few novels involve them as protagonists (above the level of Sue Barton and Cherry Ames). Nurses do exist, in American fiction but they are often important for reasons other than their training (in *A Farewell to Arms* by Hemingway, for example). Big Nurse in Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is one exception. Likewise, there are very few novels involving women as doctors: two ex-

amples are the late nineteenth century novels by Sarah O. Jewett - *A Country Doctor* (1884) and Elizabeth S. Phelps' *Dr. Zay* (1882). (This is interesting, because until medicine was "professionalized" i.e. a stipulated formal education required, most "doctors" were women. But as medical schools did not admit women, they couldn't get the necessary education or be licensed, and thus males took over).

Housework, the ubiquitous job of nearly every woman, must not be the stuff of heroines for *very* few novels I've found show that as the protagonists' only "job." However, housework may be the undercurrent of more interesting work; it may also be one's employment--as a domestic servant. Being a domestic is shown as degrading experience; the servant's every hour belonged to the mistress. The servant lost her personal freedom; she had no place in the house to invite friends, and often had to share a bad and unheated room (with poor furniture and no toilet) with another servant. She wasn't part of the family, yet was supposed to be very loyal to them, and was virtually their "slave." Fictional accounts of domestic work present these circumstances very clearly and echo sociological studies; thus they seem very accurate. The best example I found is *Lummox* by Fannie Hurst, but *Work*--Alcott, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*--Stowe, *Ethan Frome*--Wharton, *Native Son*--Wright, *Maud Martha*--Brooks and *The Street*--Petry all show the degrading nature and experiences of domestic service.

Farmer, teacher, nurse, servant, social reformer--what else do we know women have done? They've been prostitutes, artists, factory workers, independent business women, secretaries, and clerks--and we do have examples of novels showing these, especially women as factory workers--most often in the textile mills. This is historically accurate, for textile manufacturing offered the first major industrial jobs for women, beginning around 1830 in New England. The Lowell, Massachusetts mills and many others catered to young single women, offering them good boarding houses where they were supervised, met other women their age, had cultural advantages rural life couldn't offer, and thus a better situation than being hired hands for neighbors or relatives, which is what they'd previously done before marriage. These young women gained independence and also wages to contribute to their families. They wrote of their own experience (in the *Lowell Offering*), but most of the novels about women in textile mills center around those working later in southern mills. These women leave their eroded mountain farms in Kentucky, the Carolinas, and Virginia to better their lives by working for someone else--and a wage. Soon they are wage slaves, in debt to the factory for housing and food, their health gone, and no recourse. Several interesting novels (*Call Home the Heart*--Burke [1932], *To Make My Bread*--Lumpkin [1964], *The Silent Partner*--Phelps [1871], and *Emmaline*--Rosner, for example) involve women who risk their jobs, families, and even their lives to help organize unions and break factory management's dictatorial control. Their work and the conditions surrounding it lead them into social reform. (Bullard's *Comrade Yetta* is another example involving the New York garment industry, union organization and strikes).

The more famous examples of women working in industrialized settings are Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1905) and Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900). In *The Jungle*, the women drudge away in dark, wet, threatening cellars packing tainted meat products, the most awful job imaginable, and in *Sister Carrie*, Carrie labors for a while in a shoe factory, doing backbreaking piecework. Both working situations are very sympathetically described.

Women as artists? I've found a few examples--only three so far

involving women as protagonists who are paid for their work and do it as professionals. One (Thea in *Song of the Lark* by Willa Cather) is a singer who studies for years to develop her talent and move from a tiny Colorado town to Chicago, then finally to international work and fame. Two others are actresses, who seem to just "fall into" their careers. Both Carrie (*Sister Carrie* by Dreiser) and Olivia (in *Women of Genius* by Austin, 1912) seem to be simply vehicles--they're never heart and soul involved in acting, nor does it seem a satisfying, long-term artistic experience. However, there is a fine picture of a woman artist in Harriet Arnow's novel, *The Dollmaker* (1954). Gertie Nevels is a hillbilly mother of five who moves to Detroit to be with her husband who has a defense plant job during World War II. They move from farming (which she loves) and close family to the unfamiliar, dirty, impersonal city. Through months of horrible experiences there, Gertie holds on to her sanity by creating beauty with her carving of man's (Jesus'?) head out of a lovely block of wood from home, and toys and crucifixes for friends. In fact, after her husband loses his job due to strike involvement, she supports the family with her carvings. Her artistry, something her husband has considered foolish, now assumes significance to him, seeing that others will buy and appreciate her work. Women have of course also been authors, but I've found only one novel involving that (*Mrs. Stevens Hears the Mermaid Singing* by May Sarton), otherwise "only" the creations of women authors.

Though many women have worked as office or store employees, there seem to be very few novels about them until the more socially conscious 1930's. Sinclair Lewis' *The Job* (1936) is about a secretary who became a successful real estate sales-manager, and *A Time to Remember* (also 1936) by Leane Zugsmith realistically relates the work experience of department store employees--who eventually form a union and strike, a long hungry ordeal. *The Homemaker* (Dorothy Canfield, 1924) is a more romantic picture of a woman's meteoric rise from perfectionist-but-discontented-housewife to accomplished retail salesperson in a department store (while her disabled husband happily takes over the work at home).

There are very rare pictures of women in business. Edna Ferber's Emma McChesney series was very popular and, though not great literature, these novels present a sympathetic picture of a capable, attractive woman in garment design, manufacture, and sales.

So, does nineteenth and early twentieth century American literature portray the actuality of women's work? Only moderately well. Some areas such as farming are well represented, others not. Women are rarely portrayed doing many of the jobs we know they've done extensively.

It appears that very few male authors have a working woman as a protagonist (Lewis and Dreiser are two exceptions). I'd hoped to use novels by both men and women in my class, but that is not what developed.

The novels I did find were frequently difficult to track down. They were often highly regarded--and/or very popular when first published, but many have been forgotten long ago and are now out of print. Yet many were very well written with strong insights on American life. Why have, for example, Dreiser's novels survived and Kelley's, Arnow's, or Yezierska's not? Is that a comment on our attitudes toward woman as artists? Have we considered them less serious? less significant? It is a disturbing and serious question.

Beware--if you embark on a course of reading on this topic, it will

be depressing. The women work hard to provide for themselves and others, trying to do so in ways society sanctions. Even though these characters can't always verbalize this reaction, they often feel stymied by their gender and/or environment. What society approves of as work appropriate for them doesn't satisfy them (and pays little). Whether they're in the paid work force or working at home, they hope that their work will be fulfilling, in fact, they trust that it will be. But it rarely is, and a sense of betrayal and conflict/guilt sets in. What the protagonist may have set as an unusual goal, once achieved, is often empty,--or at least not enough. Sara (in *Breadgivers*) is not content even after her great self-sacrifice and struggle to become a teacher; Alexandra (*O Pioneers*) feels unfulfilled as a successful farmer. What is lacking? What do these working women express a need for? If they are mothers working at home, they yearn for space and time alone, variety and personal challenge. For almost all, there's a need for a sense of fulfillment through a sympathetic relationship with another person or sometimes a close group that understands and shares a similar sense of what is important. They discover that individual achievement is important, but so too are meaningful human relationships. We all probably feel that way--and interestingly, in these novels, it's the women who *say* so.

CONCLUSION

After teaching this course for two years, I can vouch for its appeal and impact. It is so important to expose stereotypes for what they are and to present alternatives. Reading this material, one soon becomes very conscious of the importance of women's work - how many kinds of work we have done and how much a part of the economy we have been for so long. Most women have always worked - a surprising realization for many. Our myth of how women lived, at home and supported by their husbands was true of the very few who could afford that luxury. Not all women have been just wives, mothers, on a pedestal, "old maids," wierd educated types, or idly rich ladies dictating to servants, as much literature would have us believe. This material provides strong examples of women characters who are self-aware and even independent, who fail or succeed for the same reasons men do: actions of others, narrow societal roles, limitation by circumstances (such as poverty, health, ignorance), or lack of energy. It is important to see characters who take responsibility for their own acts *and* to know that both women and men were writing about such people over a hundred years ago.

In such a course, there is still plenty of room for personal experience comparison, for oral history-gathering which enlarges the students' experience (I had them interview mothers and grandmothers about their work), good literary study, and the growing wealth of historical material which can be well used in such a course. Having a job because you want to or because you need to - neither is new. In some periods women may have combined the roles of mother and paid worker more than at other times, but it helps to know that women have always worked. One learns great respect for the achievements of our forebears, feels sorrow for their unhappiness, and gains perspective on our own lives.

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TEACHING "WOMEN'S LITERATURE"

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I have taught "Women's Literature" under various titles at both the university and secondary level over a fourteen-year time span. The following essay offers a few observations based on my experiences, both in approaching the course, in choosing reading materials, and in assigning written work.

When one first begins planning the instruction of a course entitled "Women in Literature" one is confronted with certain assumptions that no longer reflect the current critical thinking on the subject. When women first began clamoring for a voice in the curriculum about twenty years ago, they approached their subject timidly. The most prevalent concern at that time was to study "images of women" in literature written predominantly by male authors. Thus, we had studies on the image of the virgin, the whore, the bitch, or the mother in literature written by men, and women at the time felt liberated to some extent by even being able to catalogue the stereotypes that male authors had been propounding in the name of art for all these years.

The next movement, however, signalled a shift in sensibilities and heightened consciousness on the part of women. By the mid-1970's, women were no longer interested in studying images or stereotypes of themselves; they were interested in rediscovering the voices of women writers, and they set about rediscovering a female tradition in literature that parallels the male tradition. Unique about this writing is its use of "non-traditional" types of literature--diaries, journals, letters, and spiritual visions. Women writers also, according to the view of recent critics like Gubar and Gilbert,[1] share a female literary tradition with its own pervasive set of themes, images, and anxieties. According to this view, women writers separated by vast geographical, historical, and psychological distances all exhibit a similar "anxiety of authorship," and utilize images of enclosure, escape, and doubles who function as asocial surrogates for outwardly placid heroines.

It is safe to assume, then, that the outdated title, "Women in Literature," should be replaced in course descriptions and administrative catalogues by "Women's Literature," and that the instructor should begin planning the course by focussing on that body of literature generally recognized as classic works written by women. For instance, most critics would agree that that list would have to include *Frankenstein, Jane Eyre, Wuthering Heights, Middlemarch* or *Mill on the Floss, The Awakening, To the Lighthouse* or *Mrs. Dalloway, The Golden Notebook,* and *The Bluest Eye* or *The Color Purple*. Reading these novels during a semester would provide students with the historical perspective as well as the literary background to make significant observations on the themes, imagery, and concerns of women writers during the past 200 years. Those of us who have taught high school students know, however, that the list would overwhelm them; they simply would not do the reading. Even worse, they would make a raid on the nearest *Cliff Notes* display and try to get by with canned responses. The other problem is one of suitability for students at this age level. This is not to advocate censorship, but the three

most contemporary novels listed above contain some sexually explicit material that would either titillate or shock the average secondary student (not to mention the parents).

The most practical route in choosing material for the course at the secondary level is to select anthologies of writings by women. After surveying those available, I recommend Mary Anne Ferguson's *Images of Women in Literature* (notwithstanding the title!) in conjunction with Mary Helen Washington's *Midnight Birds* for the black women's perspective. Although the conceptual framework of Ferguson's edition is outdated for the reasons I have discussed above, the edition does include a valuable collection of writings by women: Sylvia Plath, Gwendolyn Brooks, Rona Jaffe, Joyce Carol Oates, Ntozake Shange, Margaret Atwood, Doris Lessing, Edna O'Brien, Colette, Kate Chopin, Tillie Olsen, Ann Beattie, Alice Walker, and many more. Also included are several notorious selections by male authors on those stereotypes we have all come to hate: Hemingway on "the bitch," Norman Mailer on "the sex object," and others. Rather than ignore those selections in the text, I assign them periodically and ask the students to analyze the differences and similarities in the way male and female writers present female characters.

I still believe it is important for students to read novels written by women, but rather than ask students to read nothing but novels, I require two comparison/contrast papers during the semester. Each paper requires the student to read two novels, either both written by the same novelist or two by different women on a similar theme or concern. I also specify that I expect these papers to display a significant amount of research on the author's life, her times, and the history of the novels under consideration (their *milieux*, their critical reception, and their influence).

In addition to two major research projects, material written by women lends itself to a number of interesting assignments, and I will briefly describe a few here. One writing assignment asks the students to "play editor" of an anthology they are compiling. I ask them to write a critique of two stories we have recently studied in class and argue that one should and one should not be included in the anthology they are preparing. In another version of that assignment, the students play literary editor of a contemporary women's magazine like *Ms.* and write an editor's column that describes and critiques contemporary women's fiction or poetry (actually the selections from our texts). In another successful assignment, the students work in groups of four to six and select characters from different stories we have studied. They fill out a worksheet designed to help them build a strong sense of that character and then they place all the characters (from disparate times and places) in a fictitious coffee shop where the characters engage in conversation on men, marriage, children, work, and the meaning of life. These screenplays are performed for the class and then the students in the audience have a chance to question the students on stage and in the role of their character. In another popular and final assignment, the students select two women and conduct an oral history interview with each woman, ideally of different races and generations. They then transcribe those interviews and write an essay entitled "Two Lives: Choices Made by Women" in which they try to analyze the social or economic factors that caused each woman to make certain decisions in life.

Teaching "Women's Literature" today offers many challenges and rewards. The field of women's studies and feminist theory is changing and advancing in sophistication rapidly, and it is crucial for a teacher in the field to be able to present current critical approaches to his or her

students.[2] And there continues to be, as there has been for the past fifteen years, the problem of interesting male students in the course. There are, in fact, a number of problems that occur when the focus of a course shifts from where it has been throughout a student's and the teacher's careers, away from the male and privileged, to the female. The course is initially off-center until students and teachers find a new center, a new focus from which to speak about human experience. But in teaching "Women's Literature" we are, ultimately, teaching students to read, analyze, and synthesize human experience from a woman's point of view. That perspective is clearly different from a man's literary and historical vantage, but with effort and expanded empathy students learn that different does not mean inferior.

NOTES

[1]See Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1979), and their recently edited anthology: *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Tradition in English* (New York: Norton, 1985).

[2]For an overview of the field with an analysis of the major issues, see Elaine Showalter, "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness," *Critical Inquiry*, 8 (1981), 179-205.

Margaret Fuller and Charlotte Perkins Gilman
Continued from page 4

the impassioned rhetoric of philosophers and reformers such as Margaret Fuller move us beyond the present and direct us towards a more enlightened future, stories such as Gilman's ground the argument firmly in reality--the personal reality that must, I think, precede successful movements toward change. For this reason, then, I would argue that fiction is an essential mode of learning, a necessary vehicle in motivating personal, no less than social, liberation.

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Notes

[1]This fact has been noted by Marie Olesen Urbanski in her article, "The Genesis, Form, Tone, and Rhetorical Devices of *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*." *Critical Essays on Margaret Fuller*. Ed. Joel Myerson. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1980: 269.

[2]Gilman, in her autobiography, tells us that it was her initial purpose in "Wall-Paper" to expose the damage inflicted by regimens such as the one prescribed to her by S. Weir Mitchell. See *The Living Charlotte Perkins Gilman: An Autobiography*. 1935; rpt. New York: Arno, 1972: 121.

MALE-FEMALE RELATIONSHIPS IN LITERATURE

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In English 102, the second of the freshman English sequence at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, I teach composition using literature that treats the theme of male-female relationships. Through close study of assigned plays, poems, and short stories, students look at the social, sexual, and psychological aspects of male-female relationships as they are seen by selected writers.

In addition to reading and discussing literature, students are also expected to continue sharpening their writing skills. Because this course is in part intended to teach argument and persuasion, particular attention is paid to argumentative/persuasive devices where they appear in literature. Students are required to write about literature using the tools of argumentation, that is, formulating a proposition (thesis) and convincing of the validity of that position with supporting proof. They also write a research paper. This course receives Women's Studies credit for students working on a minor in that area.

I first offered the course six years ago and was encouraged at that time by an article by Joseph Katz and Denise M. Cronin entitled "Sexuality and College" (*Change*, Feb.-March, 1980: 44-49). Katz and Kronin reported their observations of sexual and social behavior among students today and concluded: "To respond effectively to the intricacies of the new relations between college men and women, . . . the curriculum should expose students to human relationships in many different settings." They suggest that the study of literature is one way to respond to the new climate on campus, urging "a much fuller response on the part of institutions to help students cope with their changed situation. Faculty go on modifying the established curriculum and pay not nearly enough attention to the rich and painful lives of their students." I believe that my course "pays attention" to the issues of concern to students.

I have used a variety of textbooks over the years, so that the content of the course changes from time to time. Currently I use Alvin B. Kernan's *Character and Conflict*, 2nd edition, and Laurence Perrine's *Literature: Structure, Sound, and Sense*, 4th edition, because they are available through text rental. Students purchase an inexpensive edition of Ibsen's plays containing *A Doll's House*. In the past I have had students purchase either *Literature: the Human Experience*, edited by Richard Abcarian and Marvin Klotz (St. Martin's Press, 1978) or *Literature as Experience*, edited by Irving Howe, John Hollander, and David Bromwich (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1979).

I always include certain works no matter what text I use. I begin with Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress." Although many students profess not to know what the poem is about when they first read it, by the end of the class period there is animated discussion about the speaker's motive, the probable response of the coy mistress, and the contemporary nature of the situation. Almost always a student will point out that she has recently heard the same argument from a male friend, and sometimes a male student reveals that he's heard it from a female friend.

We discuss the *carpe diem* theme, especially the concept of taking advantage of one's youth in terms of the temptation to give into the urgency of the moment. At the end of the period I distribute copies of Lysander Kemp's "The Coy Mistress Replies," which finds the loophole in the speaker's argument: "If today he'll wed me right,/ Why then, I'll die with him tonight./ If not, then fie to his rough strife,/ He wants a bawd and not a wife." Continuing our discussion of the *carpe diem* theme, we read Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Nymph," Raleigh's "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd," Herrick's "To the Virgins to Make Much of Time," and Wilbur's "A Late Aubade."

For a contemporary treatment of the subjects of lust and love, I include James Dickey's "Cherrylog Road" and Donald Hall's "Gold." Dickey's poem recounts his adolescent sexual experience with Doris Holbrook in a sunbaked junkyard at noon. The encounter is brief, intense, furtive and tremendously invigorating, leaving the narrator feeling powerful as he tears up Highway 106 on his motorcycle, drunk on the wind, "Wild to be wreckage forever." Hall's "Gold" also includes lovemaking but with an emphasis on love, not lust. The lazy, unhurried mood of Hall's poem clearly defines a mature, enduring relationship, in contrast to the teenage lust of Dickey's poem.

Another work I always include is Strindberg's *The Stronger*. Students write an essay explaining who they think is the stronger and why. Then we discuss the play in terms of the issues it raises about strength, particularly in women. It does not matter that Strindberg himself intended Mrs. X to be the stronger. Instead, students consider all aspects of the situation: Is Mrs. X strong for staying with a husband she knows is unfaithful? Is the woman who has home, husband, and children more secure and better off than a woman like Miss Y who has ended an affair and broken an engagement, leaving her alone in the world? Generally, students defend Miss Y because she has been able to influence Mrs. X so thoroughly and because she endures Mrs. X's tirade without responding. On the other hand, a few students always see the traditional woman's role as remaining with her unfaithful husband and therefore admire Mrs. X for being willing to bend, to forgive in order to keep the man she loves. A few, usually males, point out that Mr. X has teh best deal of all!

Ibsen's *A Doll's House* illustrates what happens when husband and wife play out the roles expected of them without really getting to know one another. Students quickly see that Nora's little lies, her large deceptions, and her manipulative ways are as much responsible for the absence of communication in this marriage as Torvald's unquestioned assumption of male privileges such as obedience and submission from his wife. While he has treated her as a plaything for his social and sexual pleasure, she has erred just as greatly by not being honest with him. Students almost always agree that Nora's decision to walk out at the end of the play is necessary if she is to learn to think for herself. They also feel sympathy for Torvald, who has finally done nothing more than what he has been taught and what is expected of him as a man. Thus, students see the dangers of too rigidly defining sex roles when those roles result in barriers between the sexes. Ibsen implies through the Linde-Krogstad relationship what a "true marriage" should be, that is, a marriage in which partners treat each other with honesty, openness, and respect.

I also assign Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* because it shows what happens when a woman does not leave a bad marriage because of strict devotion to convention. It also illustrates the dangers of confining strong, intelligent women to the drawing room. Hedda's need to control others is

clearly a result of the reduced freedom and control that comes with being a traditional wife.

In our discussion of *A Doll's House*, I tell students about an article in *College English* by Eugene R. August entitled "'Modern Man', or Men's Studies in the 80's" (44[Oct. 1982]: 583-97). August observes that men's lives are characterized by drudgery, restriction, and conflict as a result of sex-role stereotyping every bit as destructive as it is for women. I refer them to a book by Herb Goldberg called *The Hazards of Being Male: Surviving the Myth of Masculine Privilege* (New York: Signet, 1976), in which the author defines life for men as a series of impossible binds. While Torvald Helmer is an excellent example of a man caught in those binds, Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman* is an even better example. Willy has a clear notion of what it is to "be a man," and he is deeply troubled by his inability to meet that standard. We talk about the meaning of success for contemporary males and females, the importance of knowing oneself and family relationships. Furthermore, we look closely at Willy's relationship with his wife Linda, who provides emotional comfort but whose well-meaning actions and words prevent Willy's facing the truth about himself.

Other works in the course are Susan Glaspell's "A Jury of Her Peers," which explores male attitudes toward women and the importance of female bonding; Tennessee William's *The Glass Menagerie*, rich with ideas about male-female relationships; and even Sophocles' *Antigone*, for its subtheme of men versus women in the conflict between Creon and Antigone. A sampling of other poems assigned are Shakespeare's "Let Me Not to the Marriage of True Minds," "When My Love Swears that She is Made of Truth," and "My Mistress's Eyes"; Adrienne Rich's "Living in Sin"; E. E. Cummings' "if everything happens that can't be done"; Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach"; and sometimes even T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," followed by John Lennon and Paul McCartney's "Eleanor Rigby."

This course has always been evaluated highly by students and typically turns away many dozens of students at registration time after the course has filled. The theme is of particular interest to students because of its relevance to their lives. It asks them to examine assumptions about males and females and the potential damage those assumptions often cause in relationships between the sexes.

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SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY: GUIDELINES FOR NONSEXIST LANGUAGE

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The study of linguistic sexism, fostered by the feminist movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, has been motivated by both intellectual curiosity and lexical necessity. While scholars of communication, education, English, journalism, linguistics, philosophy, psychology, religious studies, semantics, sociology, speech, and other disciplines have explored the relationship between gender-specific language and human behavior, church councils, corporations, feminist groups, governmental agencies, news organizations, professional associations, publishing companies, and others have developed practical guidelines to circumvent sexist language.

Several factors, however, complicate access to this literature. Because most guidelines have been compiled for limited circulation--for and by the Society of Automative Engineers, for example--they are not library-catalogued. Some guidelines are cited in catalogued works, but many of these are out of print or otherwise inaccessible, generally because the issuing organization has folded or moved. Even scholarly works on the subject can be difficult to identify because the area of inquiry is relatively new and because it is multidisciplinary. Relevant Library of Congress headings, for example, include English Language-Social Aspects, Rhetoric/Style, Sex Differences, Sex Roles, Sociolinguistics, and Women-U.S.-Social Conditions. The jargon of each discipline can further aggravate the search for relevant information. The broad category of Sex and Language, for example, will yield articles on nonverbal communication by sex-differentiation, on stereotyping in textbooks, on speech patterns by sex of speaker, on gender-marking in foreign languages, and/or on any combination of these subjects. The specific area of concern here is called biased language, discriminatory language, gender language, inclusive language, male-biased language, male-dominant language, nondiscriminatory language, nonsexist language, sex-biased language, and sexist language.

While the diversity of inquiry is surely to be celebrated, clearer, shared definitions and methods of cross-referencing are requisite to building on this literature. The bibliography presented here deals with the gender-specific lexicon of American English, excluding studies of nonverbal interaction and of usage by speaker/writer characteristics. Furthermore, it considers language objectively, separated from the context in which it is used. The broader issue of stereotyping, then, is not directly considered. Finally, works whose technical language or content would make them inappropriate for nonspecialists have been omitted.

This bibliography is extensive but not exhaustive. That a work does not appear in this list does not necessarily reflect against either its quality or its usefulness. (Editor's note: Space constraints have necessitated our excerpting; the entire bibliography is available from Ms. Jasper.)

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BOOKS

Radway, Janice A. *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984. 274 pp.

Images of Women in American Popular Culture. ed. by Angela G. Dorenkamp, et al. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1985. 462 pp.

Both of these books assert the value of examining popular culture and its texts for insights into women's position in our culture. Radway's book is an ethnographic study of a group of women from Smithton, Iowa who are chronic readers of romance novels, the genre which has proven to be the publishing phenomenon of our time. *Images of Women in American Popular Culture* is an anthology of diverse nineteenth century and twentieth century popular texts which range from diary entries and medical tracts to popular magazine articles to poems and short stories. While the two books differ widely in format, they share a commitment to the beliefs that women's experience of all kinds is a valuable study and that popular culture is rich with data on that experience and, thus, merits serious attention.

Radway's approach to romance novels and their readers is eclectic. She combines the techniques of ethnographic study with those of reader-response criticism, feminist literary analysis, and psychosexual analysis to try to determine why and how women read romances. The opening chapter looks at "the institutional matrix," the publishers of romance and how they select and market their wares. Chapter two studies the Smithton group of (largely) middle class housewives through interviews with both the readers of romances and their local leader, Dot Evans, the bookstore clerk who has amassed a loyal following of customers by previewing their texts for them. Radway treats her subjects here with uncondescending respect, listens carefully to their narratives, and records their lives and their feelings with interest and empathy. Chapter three explores the acts of reading in which these women engage on the premise that *how* one reads is as revealing as what or why. She observes that romance reading is perceived as "a special gift a woman gives herself" (p. 91) and goes beyond the cliche of escapism to insights into the particular kind of therapeutic value romances have for these readers and the particular kinds of daily reality that is being escaped. She concludes that in the act of reading romance, "the Smithton women affirm their adherence to traditional values and, at the same time, engage in a form of behavior that is itself subversive to those values." (p. 118) This subversion lies in the fact that romances *rewrite* and *revise* their readers' lives, filling the gaps, replenishing the losses, and reshaping the 'ending.' The implication is, clearly, that those lives built on traditional values are deficient.

The rest of Radway's study focuses on the books themselves, always with their readers in mind, evaluating the texts as successful or failed experiences. Her conclusions are provocative and encompass indictments of the genre as leaving unchallenged "the male right to the public spheres of work, politics, and power," (p. 217) as well as a strong defense of the community of romance readers' right to its choice of material and its pleasure in that material. Radway's book is important and valuable because she respects what she illuminates and refuses to distance herself as a feminist scholar from the women readers she writes of. *Reading the Romance* should interest teachers and students of Womens' Studies, popular culture, reader-response criticism, and the history of literature. It is at once a highly readable book and a highly responsible piece of scholarship.

Images of Women in American Popular Culture has no central reflector to shape our views as Radway does; this is an anthology which provides minimal introduction to and commentary on its widely varied selections. The selections are grouped and juxtaposed skillfully, however, and their arrangement speaks revealingly about women's issues. For instance, section two on "Women's Place" begins with de Toqueville's largely overlooked remarks on the differences between American and

European women in which he celebrates a separate but equal role for women in American society as housewives and mothers. de Toqueville's condescension is implicitly critiqued by the three selections that follow, all authored by women and including Jane Addam's "Twenty Years at Hull House." Her seriousness of vocation underscores the reductiveness of de Tocqueville's view of American women. The section ends by juxtaposing Adlai Stevenson's Commencement Address at Smith College in 1955 to that of Adrienne Rich in 1979. His traditional assumptions about women's vocation as wife and mother are sharply challenged by Rich's call for women to break new ground and to enter arenas of power in our society while maintaining "her outsider's vision . . . which binds her both to other women and affirms her in herself." (p. 120)

Each section of this rich book is arranged so as to allow the selections to comment upon one another. Such a text is valuable in teaching because it demands inference and synthesis on the part of readers/students, thereby strengthening critical thinking skills, while at the same time facilitating such activities with the careful and strategic arrangement of its selections. The selections themselves are, often, less clearly popular culture texts than Radway's romances are. The letters of Emily Dickinson or essays by feminist theorist's such as Shulamith Firestone and Robin Lakoff are hardly 'popular.' The book might be more aptly titled *Images of Women in American Culture*; nonetheless, its skillful ordering of revealing and readable selections recommends it highly.

These two works represent feminist scholarship at its best; both are suggestive, tolerant of complexity, carefully wrought, and firmly committed to the value of studying women. Laura Quinn, University of Wisconsin-River Falls

Simonsen, Thordis, editor. *You May Plow Here: The Narrative of Sara Brooks*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1986.

> But, anyway, I'm telling you, ain't that somethin! I've come a long ways --I've really come a long ways. I say, "Lord, I got a bed to sleep in, and it's mine, and a chair to sit on, and it's mine. I got a stove to cook on, and I got books to read, and I got a radio to play." Sometime I feel like cryin because there were so many days that I didn't have nothin. So I did progress, and I'm very thankful. (p 196)

With these words toward the close of her narrative, Sara Brooks affirms her achievement. She affirms as well a strength and constancy of spirit that have made her "progress" possible.

Who is Sara Brooks? An ordinary woman, you might say, not one of your known human treasures. Born in 1911, one of the elder children of a large family, she grew up on an Alabama subsistence farm, relatively protected from the hostile white community. In young adulthood, she escaped from an unhappy marriage--her husband was abusive and a philanderer and, eventually, carved out a livelihood for herself and her children in Cleveland. Thus, we discover, an extraordinary woman. For, young as she was, black, alone, unskilled, she worked through many setbacks to achieve not only economic independence but dignity and integrity as well.

Childhood memories initiate her story. We view at once her emerging character and the life and culture of the black rural south: the day by day and season by season activities, the household, the relationships, the food and dress. Life is hard and demanding, work laden; Sara is assertive, resourceful, mischievous but honest. Despite the work--and it was ongoing, morning till dark, there was a fullness to the life--some time for play and many times of family togetherness. She speaks frequently of her father, a devoted provider of both welfare and moral teachings, of backbone and pride, and of her stepmother, equally loving and hardworking. The traits and attitudes developed in these early yeats carry Sara through her most difficult years.

Thordis Simonsen has done us a major service. She has introduced us to Sara Brooks, from whom we learn much about human striving and perseverence; further, she enables us to recognize the potential in ordinary people for extra ordinary personal accomplishment. This is heightened because Sara Brooks speaks for herself. Simonsen has edited the text (her explanatory preface is instructive) to preserve the narrator's voice and to render the content faithfully yet clearly. *You May Plow Here* deserves to be read widely. Nicholas J. Karolides, UW-River Falls

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